

# CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

OF  
POPULAR

LITERATURE, SCIENCE, AND ART.

Fourth Series

CONDUCTED BY WILLIAM AND ROBERT CHAMBERS.

No. 252.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 24, 1868.

PRICE 1½d.

## WRECKED ON THE GOODWINS.

WHEN the screw *Grampus* steamed out of Boulogne harbour for the Thames, she met more than one damaged craft with shattered spars and shivered sails bearing up for that port, like crippled maldars making for the shore. The three days' storm had lulled at last, but it had bequeathed its legacy of sinister black dots to the wreck-chart of the year, its supplies of drift firewood to the cottages by the Channel.

'We've seen the worst of it, sir,' observed the captain as he descended from the gangway, when we had cleared the piers; 'and, to tell the truth, I'm not sorry, with our deck lumbered with Breton cows, and our hold full of French machinery. It's brightening down there to windward.'

It might be brightening to windward; but although things looked hardly bad enough to reconcile it to one's conscience to put off one's voyage, yet, in common, doubtless, with all the other passengers, I should have been very glad to have found myself safe in the river. Although there was no wind to speak of, and we were steaming with the heavy swell that came rolling up Channel, yet the long narrow-waisted screw, deeply laden as she was, pitched and rolled in a way that said little for her qualities as a sea-going boat. It was still early in the afternoon when the powerful lights began to revolve on the heights of Cape Gris-nez; but already the shades of a winter evening were closing around. Heavy black snow-clouds came rolling up before us, and massing themselves overhead; stray flakes fell sinking through the air, when the wind, which had changed about, and risen a little, did not drive them in our faces in its fitful puffs.

'I wish there bea'n't more than snow in them clouds,' remarked an ancient mariner. 'If the glass ain't falling now, then the glass is a liar—and that's my opinion.'

His forebodings were speedily verified by the increasing violence of the wind, that to a landsman like myself seemed to be blowing great-guns,

though possibly a sailor might have gauged its force by nothing bigger than eighteen-pounders. The word was passed to see all secured, and soon the dead-lights were up, the hatches on, and the cabin-door fast. It was only by dint of hard pleading that I escaped imprisonment. Discomforts on deck were pleasure compared to passive wretchedness below. The sight around us would have been a grand one from Boulogne pier—on board the *Grampus*, one's personal interest somewhat interfered with one's appreciation of it. The wind, as it met the long rollers, churned them up into short chopping seas, and swept their surface in blinding showers of spray. By this time, the snow was falling thick, and snow and spray were driven together in our faces, filling mouths, and eyes, and nostrils, and covering the deck with a freezing slippery paste. Now we might have been sailing the Styx, for all we saw of the lights on Cape Gris-nez; even the lamps that swung on our decks twinkled through the snow like glow-worms in a mist. The chime of the fog-bell was lost in the roar of the gale, or only tinkled through it at intervals like a spoon rattling in a tea-cup. From time to time, a sea breaking over the bows swept the ship to the quarter-deck, flooding the waist with foaming water, that went splashing over into the engine-room. Nor were even more exciting incidents wanting to break the monotony of our misery. Of a sudden we were close upon lights twinkling in the gloom, and the next moment, a huge ship plunged past us, almost rasping our bulwarks. At the first glance, noises and lights seemed to sound and sparkle in the air high overhead; then for one moment her lofty sides, her masts, and the pale faces of her crew, glanced in the brightness as they sunk past us; the next, we had left them buried out of sight, deep in the trough of the sea behind. It was close shaving. A fathom or two less to spare, and we should have been sunk there too, never to reappear; but though very grateful for our escape, I began to fear that that *dénouement* was only deferred. Thanks to that horrid iron, the vessel was rolling more deeply, and recovering herself more slowly than

before. Some of the startled cattle had broken from their halts, and were making wild confusion forward. Their bellow of terror rose clear through the noise of the wind, cut short and dying away in a stifled gurgle, as a wave broke in their open throats.

'We must lighten her forward, and the cattle must go,' said the captain; 'so lend a hand, men. Go to work with a will, and clear the decks.'

Every one was willing enough to get rid of those dangerous passengers; but to do so was a service of both difficulty and danger. The bulwarks were high, and the poor little Bretons half wild with terror; and small as they were, the going down among them was like entering the amphitheatre to combat wild beasts in the middle of an earthquake. However, we managed to open the side of the ship, and cut loose those nearest to it; and the next roll beginning the work, two of them fairly tumbled out and disappeared in the darkness and water. And one by one the Channel received them all; and high time it was, for although the vessel rose more buoyantly to the waves, it had come on to blow harder than ever.

'If we could but send the iron after the cattle,' said the mate, breathing hard after his exertions.

'If wishing could pull us through it,' shouted back the captain, 'I'd wish for moorings at Tower Wharf; but it'll be some time before we weather the Foreland in the teeth of such a gale.'

As he spoke, a tremendous sea fell on the bows like the stroke of a Nasmyth hammer, and swept the fore-deck with greater violence than ever, tearing from their fastenings the cattle-stalls, and everything else that would yield, and burying us where we stood behind the funnel in torrents of falling spray. The *Grampus* fell off a little; and while drenched and miserable, we were yet clutching like grim death to the rail of the engine-room, another wave struck us on the quarter, dragging the boat that was hanging there from one of the davits to which it swung, and staving in its side against that of the steamer.

'Steady at the wheel!' sung out the captain as soon as he could articulate; and a second man was sent aft to assist the steersman.

'Would it not be better to put her about, and run down Channel before the gale?' observed the mate.

The captain shook his head. 'I don't like that confounded iron: it's not only that it rocks the ship like an empty cradle, till she feels like turning over on the other side; but you don't know where you are with the compass. It's risky driving fifty knots before the storm, when it's as dark in the Channel as in the steward's locker.'

'Where do you take us to be now, sir?'

'Off the south end of the Goodwins, as near as I can guess; and we may as well keep the safe side, and give them a wide berth. Tell them to keep her away a point.'

We had certainly excitement to keep us on deck; but for anything that we could see of what was going on around, we might just as well have been cooped up in the cabin. Unless we shouted them into one another's ears, our words seemed swept away by the gale, before they had well passed our lips. We could see the iron stays of the funnel move, as if grasped and violently shaken by invisible hands, and here and there a shroud had snapped, and was streaming straight out into the air. The damaged boat, which, as it swung loose,

threatened to beat in the bulwarks, had been cut away. The ship was fighting her way on her altered course, although we began to fear that the water gathering in her waist might cripple her before long, by drowning the engine-fires. All at once, the turmoil of the sea below seemed to grow louder, and down for the time the roaring and howling of the winds above. The captain, who happened to be near me, sprang to the steamer's side, clenching it in his hands, and craning his body forward into the darkness, his ear half-turned to the sea, and his face, in the light thrown on him by a lamp behind, expressing successively anxiety, doubt, and horror. The next moment, he turned, and made a rush towards the men at the wheel, when a violent shock forward threw him on his face. I myself rolled backward on the deck, while a splintering crash and a piercing shriek rose through the deeper roar of the elements. When I staggered on to my feet, the vessel was beating with a heavy convulsive motion, like a stranded whale struggling in vain to get afloat; the waves were breaking in the fore-deck, flying over the sides in floods of blinding foam; and the lamp that had swung from the foremast had disappeared. When the steamer struck, the mast had gone by the board, pinning a wretched sailor beneath it, as it went crashing through the bulwarks.

Already the captain was giving his orders by the engine-hatch, and the engines were reversed—but all to no purpose. It was evident, indeed, that in a few minutes the water must flood the fires; and as wave after wave went down, the engineer and stoker came scrambling up, looking, with their black faces washed into grimy streaks, like Indians painted for the war-path. Other sounds, too, were making themselves heard. The few passengers who had been shut up below, had found the door secured on the outside, and in an agony of excitement and terror, were beating it and yelling for release. But when they filed out, with the old steward, who had been left in charge below, at their head, it struck me that the prevalent feeling was rather relief at being still above water at all, than horror at finding themselves grounded in mid-channel. Most of them seemed to have made up their minds that they were already at the bottom; and as for the only female of the party, she lay in a dead faint and swathed in blankets. For the present, the quarter-deck was so far high and dry—that is to say, nothing worse threatened us there than an occasional shower of spray. The steamer forward was fast buried in the sand, that held her as in a vice; the convulsive beating had ceased; but although her bows received the full force of the breakers, and the shocks and strain on her waist were comparatively slight, yet it was impossible not to feel that at any moment she might go to pieces. When we came to talk it over, there was little difference of opinion as to the geography of our present position.

'That infernal iron must have twisted the needle half round,' groaned the captain. But so much said, he dismissed the subject for the present, and gave himself up to the more urgent business of saving his passengers and crew. It was clear that while he intended to shape his course well to the outside of the Goodwins, we had in reality been coasting them on the English side; and the unlucky order of keeping the steamer a point away, had probably only precipitated a catastrophe we could hardly have escaped.

Now he affected wonderfully well a hopefulness he could not have felt. To be sure, we had one boat left, but it seemed certain death to launch it in such a sea and in such a gale. The great point in our favour was, that the snow had ceased, and the night was beginning to clear a little. If at present it only served to shew us the white crests of the breakers that were roaring all around, at least we had the chance of sooner or later being seen and fetched away.

'See everything clear for lowering the boat!' said the captain; 'but the ship's good to hold together for twenty-four hours to come, now that she's beached so snug; and long before that, we'll have half-a-dozen life-boats making a race for us.'

His words seemed to have small comfort for the terror-stricken groups huddled by the companion, if indeed they heard them at all. They did not look the sort of men greatly accustomed to be knocked about. There were half-a-dozen well-to-do Englishmen—tradesmen or farmers—most of them muffled to the throat like walking rolls of woollen; and a Frenchman or two, in thin overcoats, light-coloured pantaloons, and jean boots—got up more for a summer lounge on the Boulevards than a winter-night in the Channel.

'Fetch up a lot of blankets for those gentlemen, steward,' said the captain, looking at their clattering jaws and hueless faces. By this time, too, the lady who had fainted had unluckily awaked to a sense of the situation, and with her head thrown back, and her eyes wide open, lay giving out shriek on shriek. 'Now, steward,' said the captain, 'a glass of brandy all round, and then not a drop more to any one, at your peril.'

While the captain was looking after the comfort of his passengers, the crew had, under the orders of the mate, been working like men for their safety. They could still reach the gangway that crossed the ship before the funnel, and on this they had secured a barrel half-filled with tar, and rummaged out from somewhere below. They found some little trouble in persuading a light of any sort to burn; but soon it was blazing merrily away, the flames only fanned by the violence of the wind, that swept away the smoke in thick black swirls. The passengers were clustered by the stern; and in the wild blaze, their features shewed with every shade of horror and despair, as it cast its glare on the surf that was breaking all around. The storm was a rough test for the old timbers and rivets of the *Grampus*; but it might be hoped that they would hold together till the beacon had brought us help. The worst of it was, that the tide was steadily making, and although it was certain that it could not float us off, it seemed by no means so clear that we should not be swamped in its rise. An hour or two later, and cod and haddocks might be disporting themselves on the decks, and reposing upon the cabin sofas of the *Grampus*. It was bitter cold where we were standing; even if we staid there, it seemed unlikely that all of that shivering group could keep body and soul together till morning; and even if we succeeded in raising and securing them on the mainyard, chilled and soaked as they were, the piercing wind would only precipitate the divorce. Still, in preparation for the worst, a whip and a pulley were rigged to the mast, a little store of spirits and stimulants sent up, and ropes kept in readiness to lash helpless bodies to the yard.

'See all ready with the boat, Barker,' I could

hear the captain say to the mate; 'it may give us a squeak for our lives, if a little one.'

Meanwhile, as the deck was getting much too wet for us, preparations were made for a flitting aloft. Two active fellows, spite of pea-jackets and wading-boots, mounted to the cross-trees like monkeys; a guy was lowered to be attached to the prostrate form of the lady, when all at once a strange sound came borne to our ears on the storm. We looked in each other's faces in eager silence—those of us at least who had their senses about them. Was it the scream of a gull, or was it really the cry of a boatman? But it came again; and this time all doubt was gone; and then the captain seized a trumpet he had kept by him, and gathered his chest together to heave out with a mighty bellow: 'Hollo, life-boat ahoy!' Half of our group sprang to their feet with every eccentric extravagant demonstration of joy; the other scarcely cared to raise their heads, as they sat huddled up into dripping bundles.

Now our straining eyes make out, in the faint moonlight, a boat borne towards and past us on the crest of a monster wave. The object of the strong arms and practised heads who manned her was to bring her up, and lay her to on the more sheltered side of the *Grampus*, where the long waves were broken, and came popping up like the water in a boiling caldron. Even there on our lee, the work would be dangerous enough both for us and them; but on the other side, any such attempt must have been fatal. Ropes were got in readiness on board, some to fling over the side, some with running nooses, to help those who were powerless to help themselves. Soon our lights fell on the faces of the stanch boat-crew, all looking anxiously determined, from their weather-beaten old cockswain, on whose coolness and judgment the lives of all depended, to the younger hands in the bows, who stood ready to catch the ropes we should fling, and to fend off. The ropes are thrown and caught, the boat is rising and falling on the breaking swell below our counter, the faces of her crew now almost level with our bulwarks, now gazing up at us from far below, and across a chasm of surging foam.

'Come along, mates, come along,' roared the cockswain, and as the life-boat rose again, one of our seamen set the example, and took the leap. Then the passengers followed, but each with a rope passed under his arms, in case of accidents. Those who were paralysed by cold or fright were handed over the sides, swung down like so many packages, and dragged on board through the waves by the ready hands of the life-boatmen. One seaman who made the jump unattached, seemed to lose his foothold as he sprang, and fell short into the seething waters. But it was written that we should all be saved. Providentially, his head bumped on the life-boat as he was washed past her quarter, and the next moment her steersman's strong hand had locked itself in his hair. Last came the captain, now the most downcast of us all, for while all else were too grateful to quit a vessel that they had feared might be their coffin, he had left both ship and character on the Goodwins. At another time, that voyage ashore in the life-boat would have seemed like sailing in the jaws of death; but after the hours of terror we had passed on those fatal sands, to me, at least, it was pleasant as a summer cruise. Landfolks whom the gale kept awake that night, as it howled round their chimney-pots

and rattled their windows, may have thought the storm a wild one; but for me, spite of the biting wind that pierced my soaked and half-frozen clothes, I never recollect experiencing so luxurious a feeling of peaceful homelike security, as when we ran past the pier-lights into Deal harbour. But even to appreciate the full comfort of a bed on shore, perhaps few people would care to try the experiment of a night on the Goodwins.

### THE HINDU VIEW OF THE LATE ECLIPSE.

TOTAL eclipses of the sun have always inspired awe and wonder in the beholders, and on one occasion, as Herodotus informs us, an eclipse struck two belligerent armies with such a panic, that they felt that the gods had declared against the war, and accordingly made a treaty of peace. But never from the time of that memorable eclipse, which astronomers, by the aid of the lunar tables, can now shew must have taken place on the 28th of May 584 B.C., has any celestial phenomenon excited half so much interest as the solar eclipse of August 18, 1868. Our readers will have other opportunities of making themselves acquainted with the new acquisitions to astronomical science made during its observation, by European savans, sent out to India for that special purpose. Our object, in the present paper, which we are writing beneath an Indian punkah, is to describe the superstitions and ceremonies of the Hindus around us, in connection with the event.

The myriads of human beings, moving onward from all quarters, to bathe in the sacred streams of the peninsula, on the day of the eclipse, must have excited, in the minds of many of our recent European visitors, an interest only less intense to that centered in the glorious phenomenon itself.

Some weeks before the time of the eclipse, it has been one of the chief topics of conversation in the villages. Those who can read have learned all they can about it from the *Panchāngam*, the vernacular almanac, which they consult on all occasions, more religiously than ever our grandmothers sought the advice of *Old Moore*; and many have been the disputes among the Pandits on the conflicting statements of the Purāṇas about the matter of the ceremonies. But literate and illiterate are all eager, in the evenings, to repair to the spot where the village Jyotishan (astrologer) recounts, for the edification of all, the oft-repeated tale of the Suras and Asuras. Let us draw near, and listen to him. He has already at some length related, from the *Mahābhārata*, the story of the churning of the milk-sea, by which were produced the moon (and this, by the way, gives some colour to the assertion that 'the moon is made of green cheese'), the goddess of Fortune, the Horse swift as thought, Vishnu's Diamond, the Tree of Plenty, and last of all, the Amrita or Ambrosia.

He now describes the efforts of the hosts of Asuras to overpower the Suras, and so to obtain possession of the draught which should confer immortality.

'Now,' says he, 'the Asuras seize their bright arms, and with horrid shouts, they rush on the holy Suras, and would have done as they listed, had not the gracious Vishnu taken upon him the form of a woman, and obtained the white vessel in which was the holy beverage. He gives it to the Suras, one by one, to drink thereof. Seeing this, one of the Asuras disguises himself as a Sura, approaches, and, with blasphemous presumption, begins to drink from the sacred vessel. Immediately, the sun and moon, from whose all-searching beams nothing is hidden, find out the imposture, and reveal the truth to Maha Vishnu. With just indignation, the god seizes his glittering weapon, and with one stroke separated the Asura's head from his body. Severed by the keen weapon, the mighty head of the Asura, with a horrid cry, bounds aloft into the regions of space, and, by virtue of the ambrosia, immortal, becomes the black dragon Rahu. Down falls the mighty mass which was the body, but is now the dragon Ketu; the earth shakes; rocks are riven, and forests nod to their fall. Then the dragon Rahu swears an awful oath of perpetual enmity against the sun and moon; and, at the times foretold by the twice-born Brahmins, he seizes upon those luminaries, and causes their eclipse. Darkness covers the earth; and all would perish, did not the holy Vaidikas, with outstretched hands, repeat the Vedas, and avert the catastrophe.'

European science has as yet produced but little effect upon the minds of the superstitious masses of India. Of the many millions who witnessed the eclipse of the 18th of August last, there were comparatively few who did not verily believe that it was caused by the dragon Rahu in his endeavour to swallow up the Lord of Day. And we ourselves, as we watched the eclipse from the flat roof of an Indian house, were struck with the poetical force of the story, when we observed, as it were, 'the first bite' taken out of the sun's disc, and gazed with awe at the increasing darkness. It easily appears that the dragons Rahu and Ketu are personifications of the nodes, ascending and descending. The astrologers of Europe seem to have inherited the tradition from their Aryan progenitors, for, strangely enough, the astrological name of the ascending node is *Caput Draconis*, and of the descending, *Cauda Draconis*. In like manner, it may be noted, we, as well as the Greeks and Romans, have inherited the Indian names of the constellations and of the days of the week.

Darkness is the most fitting emblem of evil; while light symbolises the truthful and good. As Max Müller has shewn, in most of the Aryan myths the hero represents the sun, while darkness is generally personified as a snake or a dragon lying coiled around the dawn.

What the Great Day of Atonement was to the Jews, the period of an eclipse is to the Hindus. All castes, from the Brahman to the Pariah, keep strict fast. Fearful are the penalties denounced on those who neglect its observance—leprosy, during seven successive transmigrations after this life is



over, awaits them. On the other hand, numerous blessings, in the present and future life, will be bestowed on those who meritoriously perform the proper ceremonies; and one prayer, or *mantra*, repeated during the time of eclipse, has the efficacy of a hundred said at any other time.

The pious Hindu, before the eclipse comes on, takes a torch, and begins to search his house, and carefully removes all cooked food, and all water for drinking purposes. Such food and water, by the eclipse, incur *Grahana seshah*—that is, uncleanness, and are rendered unfit for use. Some, with less scruples of conscience, declare that the food may be preserved by placing on it *dharba* or *kusa* grass. This grass is largely used in the ceremonies that follow; it is known to botanists as *Poa cynosuroides*; it is esteemed as sacred throughout the length and breadth of India; and is thought to be the abode of a benevolent goddess, who secures to man the fruit of his good works.

Women who are near their confinement, when the hour of eclipse approaches, are carefully locked up in a dark room, for it is supposed that, should they see the eclipse, the result would be that the child would be born with some deformity. This is the only exception which the Sastras (*ceremonial laws*) allow: all others, from the infant to the dying man, must go forth to bathe; and not till the deliverance of the sun is effected, must any one presume to eat. The glorious sun, the source of life and heat, is looked upon as the father of the universe; and now, in the hour of his adversity, should not his children mourn?

Snake-charmers and necromancers prepare their horrid charms, and they will seize the favourable time of darkness for their evil incantations. Unclean reptiles and demons are then at large, and, invoked by powerful spells, they must listen, perforce, to the voice of the charmer, and assist him to work new mischief, or report the success which, by their aid, has attended former machinations. Witchcraft is as firmly believed in, and its rites as commonly practised in the present day in India, as ever it was in Europe during the dark ages.

On the morning of the 18th of August, the roads leading towards the principal rivers were thronged. There is a tradition repeated concerning each of these rivers, that, at certain periods, the Ganges, by a secret and subterranean passage, miraculously mingles its waters with theirs, and thus makes them partake of its own sanctity. The river Krishna is esteemed as the tutelary goddess of the strip of country lying between lines of north latitude eighteen and fifteen degrees, which lines, in India, nearly coincided with the limits of the totality of the solar eclipse. To its banks might be seen hastening all castes of Hindus, some poor people who had travelled on foot distances of thirty or forty miles; others, native magnates, drawn in carriages of English manufacture, with running-footmen waving fans of peacocks' feathers on either side. Old men with trembling limbs, and infants in arms, are conducted by their friends to the stream, there, for the aged, to wash away the sins of a nearly spent lifetime, or for the young, to acquire merit, which shall entitle them to health and wealth in the future.

Multitudes line the banks of the river, wearing on the ring-finger of the right hand a ring made of *dharba*; and many Sudras have on also a string made of the same grass plaited, passing over the left shoulder and under the right arm, to supply

the place of the sacred thread, fit to be worn only by the twice-born castes. As the hour approaches, the men and women separate themselves into groups of from thirty to fifty persons. To each group of men is a Purohita or Vaidika Brahman, well versed in the necessary formularies. Each worshipper washes his hands and feet in the stream, sips water three times from his hollow palm, and then sits cross-legged on the bank of the river, with face turned toward the sun. All anxiously look for the commencement of the eclipse, and some endeavour to mark the moment by observing the reflection of the sun in the water; others imitate the Europeans, and look at the sun through coloured glasses.

The eclipse has commenced, and the Purohitas repeat, in Sanscrit, the Sloka to ask the favour of Ganapati (*called also Ganesa*), the Hindu Janus, who is invoked at the commencement of every undertaking. The Sloka we may thus translate:

'On the white-robed, the preserver, the moon-like, the four-handed, elephant-faced one,

Let us meditate for the removal of all difficulties.'

Then follow several Slokas from the *Mahābhārata*, which are recited as mantras. The substance of them we here give:

'Be a man pure or impure, if he think on Vishnu, all his sins will go.

Sins of thought, of word, and of deed, if he mutter the holy name of Rama, will go.

This day is holy as Vishnu.

This asterism is as Vishnu.

The world itself is Vishnu.

Sri Govinda, Sri Govinda, Sri Govinda. [Holy, Holy, Holy Vishnu.]

At this time, and in this place, let all the nine deadly sins, and all sins of ignorance and of presumption, go.

In this meritorious time I bathe.'

And now the groups of men and women, with their garments tightly swathed about them, and standing in the water up to their middle, plunge their heads beneath the surface of the stream.

Each good Brahman afterwards stands with his face to the sun, and meditates on Vishnu. He then takes up water in the palm of his hand, and pours it out towards the sun, repeating that most sacred and mysterious mantra called the *Gāyatri*,\* which has puzzled so many of our Sanscrit scholars. Each handful of water, so consecrated and thrown aloft, strikes the dragon Rahu with the force of a thunderbolt, and weakens him in the pending struggle.

When the Brahmins have at length effected the sun's deliverance, they bathe again, repeating the words: '*Mochana sudnam karishe*'—that is, 'I bathe on account of the happy release.'

A Sudra, who has on this day to make Tarpanam (ceremonies for the repose of the soul of a deceased parent), engages a Brahman Purohita, who makes for him the ring and band of *dharba* grass, and instructs him to repeat in the vernacular these words: 'I, standing here, as if on the northern bank of the holy Ganges, satisfy the manes of my deceased parent with offerings of the five kinds of ambrosial food. Thus I satisfy, I satisfy, I satisfy.'

\* The *Gāyatri* is thus rendered into English by the Brahma-Samajists (followers of Rammohun Roy): 'Om! Air, Heaven! We meditate on the excellent power and wisdom of that supreme Deity, who gave birth to the world, and who sends to us the wealth of wisdom.' This, however, is more paraphrastic than Colebrooke's rendering.

Then the Purohita receives gifts from the Sudra, butter, curds, and the five products of the plantain tree; with rice and money, according to the circumstances of the giver. Even the gift of a cocoa-nut, or of a pumpkin, does not lose its reward, but procures the donor as much merit as if he had given a milch cow and calf at any other time; and the gift of a little land becomes 'like unto Mount Meru!'

Standing among the crowd, many may be observed with narrow golden or silver plates, or strips of palm-leaf bound round their heads. They have found out, on consulting the scheme of their nativity, that they were born under the same asterism as that in which the eclipse takes place. Peculiar dangers threaten such throughout the year, but the Purohita teaches them how to baffle the coming evils. By his direction, they have engraved upon a golden or silver plate, or, if poor, upon a palm-leaf, these Sanscrit Slokas, addressed to the guardians of the eight points:

In the East, *Indra*—The god of all gods, the bearer of the thunderbolt, the hundred-eyed Indra; let him remove from me the (*Doshah*) sin or defect brought on me by the sun's eclipse.

In the South-east, *Agni* (Fire)—He who regards merits and demerits; he who rejoices the heart of his wife Châya (Shadow); let him remove from me, &c.

In the South, *Yama*—He who bears the destroying sickle of Time; who rides upon the buffalo; let him remove from me, &c.

In the South-west, *Nairitah*—The giant-like king; he who, on the day of doom, shall equal the god of Fire; let him remove from me, &c.

In the West, *Varuna*—He who holds the snake-ropes; he who rides upon a fish; Varuna, the king of the waters; let him remove, &c.

In the North-west, *Vayu* (Wind)—The spirit-like Vayu, who rides upon the fleet deer; let him remove, &c.

In the North, *Kubera*—The lord of all wealth, the beloved of Siva; he who comes upon the shoulders of a man; let him remove, &c.

In the North-east, *Isanah*—He who upholds the moon; who carries the bow *Pindan*; who rides upon the bull; let him remove, &c.

When the ceremonies are over, the supplicant takes the plate which he wore on his forehead, and gives it to the Purohita, asking him to procure him absolution in return.

We heard of a rather amusing altercation that took place just after the eclipse was over. A Purohita had received an engraved silver chaplet from a Sudra, and had granted the asked-for absolution. The Sudra, however, looked upon the gift as merely formal, and as a part of the ceremony which was by no means irrevocable. He therefore required the Brahman to return the silver plate, and he would make him a less valuable present in money. The Brahman took a different view of the case, and indignantly asked: 'Can that which is bestowed as a gift be taken back again? Besides, have I not taken upon me your sins? Am I to bear their heavy burden for nothing?' The Sudra, who, it seems, had an account with his reverend preceptor, and owed him money for previous services, presumptuously rejoined: 'Well, if you don't return it, I'll deduct the money from what I have yet to pay you.'

\* Mount Meru is the Hindu Olympus.

Though the Brahman managed to carry off the plate, such an incident is a sign of the times, and shews that in India a disposition to question the extravagant claims of the Brahmans has already begun to manifest itself. A Sudra, a few years ago, would never have dared to make such a speech.

It is not so long since we ourselves have ceased to honour Zadkiel and his fraternity, that we can afford to laugh with much spirit at the superstitions of our fellow-subjects in the East. Still, when we consider the vast change that took place in the opinion of Europe within a hundred years of the time when Galileo was called upon 'to abhor, detest, and recant' a scientific truth, we cannot be without hope for India. She has long lain under an eclipse, and the demons of darkness have gloated over their prey; but the days of their power are numbered. Hundreds of young Hindus are now studying in English schools and colleges, established by the government and by missionary societies; and a generation is rising up which will thrust rudely aside the superstitions of the Purânas. The keen intellect of the Hindu is capable of much, when untrammelled by superstition; and who can say what conquests in the fields of science he may yet be destined to accomplish? There are many Hindus who are even now proving themselves no mean disciples of their European masters. Mr Pogson, the eminent astronomer, thus writes from Madras; and his is no solitary experience: 'The calculations of the eclipse for twelve important and conveniently accessible stations, situated within the limits of totality, and of its partial phases at Madras, have all been carefully made by C. Ragoonatha Acharya, the head native assistant at the Madras Observatory; and it is simple justice to add, that the very considerable labour he has bestowed upon them was undertaken from pure attachment to science, and was accomplished solely in his leisure hours, without the slightest aid or advice from any one. The information afforded in his tabular results is all that can be required or desired for the prediction of the various phenomena of the eclipse.'

Long before Copernicus had revived the Pythagorean system in Europe, it was taught by the astronomers of India. Aryabhata, one of them, whom Colebrooke believes to have lived not later than 400 A.D., and probably much earlier, in flat contradiction to the Purânic theory, which places the earth upon the back of an immense tortoise, distinctly declares: 'The earth stands in the sky, and, by its own gradual motion, is the cause of the apparent rising and setting of the sun and planets.' But such doctrines as these were dangerous. The Brahmans decided that they should be no longer tolerated, for what was more plainly declared in the Sastras than that the earth rested on the back of a tortoise, and that the sun rose and set; and could anything be more evident to the senses? Hence, the same method of raising an outcry against science, by appealing to the religious feelings and vulgar experiences of the masses, and thus endeavouring to stifle the truth by persecution, has been tried in India as well as in Europe, and has too long been found successful.

Each one who has the true spirit of the philosopher and the philanthropist will therefore the more sympathise with the cry now going up from India, so long benighted, but now stretching out her hands, and praying for light. Let the motto

adopted by the members of the Brahma Samāj, her own noble sons, who have commenced the crusade against darkness, be our encouragement: *Satyam eva jayati*—Truth alone will prevail.

## FOUND DEAD.

### CHAPTER XIII.—THE CHARGE LAID UPON CHARLES STEEN.

RUMOUR, at all times fleet of foot, in these days rivals Thought itself for speed. The open verdict returned by the wise men of Allgrove sped on horseback to Chudleigh station, and flashed along the wires to Clifford Street, within the hour.

On horseback too, by gig and afoot, it went forth that afternoon throughout the county, while in the village itself there was nought else but it banded from mouth to mouth. In Morden Hall alone, whither was brought that afternoon the unconscious cause of all this babblement, there was nothing said of the verdict above the breath. It was deemed right that the widow and her daughter should not be told that, in the opinion of twelve of their neighbours—or at least of a majority of that number—it was, however improbable, within the range of possibility, that the squire had not come to his end by fair means.

It was understood that this decision had been arrived at solely through the evidence of crotchety Dr Fungus; and that gentleman—notwithstanding the highly flavoured dish of gossip which he had thus afforded to a most appreciative public—was consequently looked upon with great disfavour. He was staying for the time with Farmer Groves, whose sister (dead these twenty years) he had married in middle life; and even his host and brother-in-law, it was said, had expressed himself on the matter in very indignant terms.

In addition to the telegraphic message, Charles had written a letter to Mr Frederick Blissett, setting forth how this unfortunate circumstance had occurred; and had also obeyed the rector's injunctions, in inquiring what were Mr Blissett's intentions with respect to the widow's remaining at the Hall, or removing to the cottage called Rill Bank.

Throughout the day, he saw nothing of Miss Christie; but in the evening, much to his surprise, when he returned from dining with Mr Mellish, he received a visit from her in the study. She had now her new mourning on; and the high black dress, with its small white collar and cuffs, became her, as it seemed to him, more than any attire she could possibly have worn; and yet, perhaps, if he had been an older man, even its beauty would not have struck him so much as the sad wisdom of that girlish face, in which grief for the dead was subdued, though scarcely mitigated, by anxiety for the living.

'It was thoughtful of you to come home so early, Mr Steen,' said she, in her low sweet voice—'to leave the good rector's company for this mournful house;' and she turned an involuntary glance to the wall, which now alone separated them from the visible presence of Death.

'If I had thought I could have been of the slightest service to you, Miss Christie,' said the young man earnestly, 'I would have come home (since you are so good as to call it so) even earlier; nay, I would not have left—left home at all.'

'We are sure of that, Mr Steen—both mamma and I. You are so great a favourite of hers, that she wishes to see you'—and here she gave a troubled smile—'upon some matter which she will not even confide to me.'

'What!—to-night, Miss Christie?'

'Yes, now—at once. Pray, don't disturb yourself about the hour. Mamma, alas! takes scarcely any sleep. If you had been late instead of early, it would have mattered nothing.'

'I am at your service, Miss Christie, and at hers,' answered the young man, 'now and at all times.'

'That is what Mr Mellish was promising for you to mamma this afternoon,' said Christie with a grave smile. 'He has become your godfather as to your intentions towards us, I assure you.'

'I would my power were equal to my will,' sighed Charles. 'Oh, Miss Christie, is there anything—anything in the world that I can do? You will remember, even if I am of no use, that I had the will.'

'Yes, Mr Steen. At a time like this' (she had led the way into the hall, and now made a pause at the door, behind which lay, in an unaccustomed room, the late master of that headless house), 'we forget nothing.'

They passed up-stairs in silence; and when they reached Mrs Blissett's door, Christie did but knock gently at it, and then signed to him that he should go in alone.

The widow was sitting on her couch, propped up by pillows, exactly as though she had never moved since he had seen her eight-and-forty hours before; but the old resolute and set expression of her face was changed to one that, though woeful, was both kind and winning. For the first time, it struck him how like she must once have been to her daughter.

'Will you come and shake hands with me,' said she, 'and forgive me my rude words of the other day?'

'I have nothing to forgive, dear madam,' replied Charles, taking her wasted fingers, and carrying them to his lips. 'I trust you are feeling somewhat stronger—better!'

'I am as well as I am ever likely to be,' answered she quietly. 'Sit you down there, Mr Steen.'

He seated himself beside her, and close to a small table, on which he now perceived were laid a watch and seals, some money, and a penknife too large for a lady's use—articles which he at once rightly concluded had been found on the person of the deceased squire, and been given up to the widow that afternoon, on the termination of the inquiry into the cause of his death. He could scarcely keep his eyes off these dreadful mementoes, but Mrs Blissett did not appear to notice them just now.

'I am informed,' continued she, 'that you have kindly promised to write to your—to Mr Frederick Blissett, with respect to his intentions as to our remaining at the Hall.'

'I have already done so, madam; and if I could learn your own wishes in the matter, it would give me a genuine pleasure to convey them. Most

earnestly do I desire to be of service to you and yours.'

'I and mine do not now comprehend much, Mr Steen; but we should be all the more grateful on that account for your good-will. I know that we possess it; I can read it in your eyes and in your voice. Perhaps, to us poor crippled folk, from whom external nature is shut out, except so much of it as can be seen through a window-pane—perhaps, I say, it is given to us to discern man's character more easily than the hale—my dear Frank, yonder' (she looked upward), 'had a loyal confidence that all hearts were like his own (and alas, how it was abused!)—or perhaps it is that since we see so few of our fellow-creatures we study them the more earnestly, like some poor student with his half-dozen books. At all events, Mr Steen, I am well persuaded that you are my true friend and Christie's.'

'God bless you, madam, for that saying,' exclaimed the young man eagerly: 'now, only shew me how to prove it. There is nothing—consistently with my duty to him I serve'—

'There is no need to make that proviso,' interrupted the widow gravely. 'God forbid I should tempt you to betray your trust! Tempt you, did I say?' added she bitterly. 'We have nothing, Christie and I, with which to tempt the poorest, or so little, in comparison with what we had, that it seems nothing. Yes, thanks to the will of a man who died before her mother was born, my Christie is now penniless. Do you understand, sir, we are paupers, my child and I—but yet not beggars; let him know that. We are not dependent, even now, upon Mr Frederick Blissett's bounty.'

'As I am, madam.'

'True; I had forgotten, Mr Steen. Grief and Wrong make us very selfish. What I was about to say was, that we shall leave the Hall at once; within the month. It is my intention to reside at Rill Bank. I regret, therefore, that you should have been troubled to communicate with Mr Frederick Blissett upon that matter. It is unnecessary to explain to you—even if your relations with him permitted of it, which they do not—the circumstances that preclude my accepting favours at his hands; but I can accept none,' she spoke so far with vigour, and even vehemence, but her feeble frame gave way before she could conclude, and she sank back on her pillows, murmuring, in a faint voice: 'never, no, never!'

Charles took advantage of the enforced silence to urge an argument which had been supplied to him for such an occasion as the present by sagacious Mr Mellish.

'Forgive me, madam, if what I am going to say may seem impertinent,' said he tenderly; 'but it is not possible that, weakened by sickness and broken by sorrow, your judgment may be somewhat sacrificed to prejudice—or, if you will have it so, to feeling? I do not speak of the certain damage to your own interests which even a negative expression of your antipathy would produce—but there is Miss Christie. You would surely not desire your feud with Mr Blissett to be hereditary?'

The widow sighed. 'You are wise beyond your years, sir,' said she slowly.

'Nay, madam, it is rather that you are blinded by your grief to worldly things, else you would see what is so obvious.'

'I will think over the matter, Mr Steen. It will be time to express our poor wishes when your

patron has communicated his desire to hear them. I sent for you to speak of something else; to ask a favour of another sort of you, and one within your power to grant.'

'It is granted, madam, before asked.'

'I desire to know what was the coroner's verdict this morning as to how my poor husband came by his death.'

A cold perspiration bedewed the young man's face. The verdict was the very thing he had been enjoined by the rector to keep secret from the widowed invalid; the matter about which he knew Mr Mellish had himself been interrogated by her that afternoon without revealing the truth. He had told her vaguely that the decision arrived at by the jury was the usual one in such cases, and she had seemed to be satisfied; but now it seemed he had only made things worse by the vagueness of his reply. It was evident that Mrs Blissett's suspicions were dreadfully excited. Her pale lips twitched convulsively; her hollow eyes fixed themselves upon the young man's countenance with pertinacious inquiry.

'You have promised to tell me,' gasped she. 'I have no one else in whom to trust. The rector deceived me—I am sure of that. Charles Steen, you are young and truthful; if the memory of your mother is dear to you, or if you hope to one day possess a faithful and loving wife, do not you deceive me also. What was the verdict?'

'Well, madam, I believe the jury were not all agreed. Some thought it should be Accidental Death'—

'But the others—the majority,' interrupted the widow impatiently, 'what did they say? Was it'— She raised herself slowly upon her hands, and breathing hard, like one in mortal pain, she whispered hoarsely—'was it Murder? Was it Wilful Murder?'

'Indeed, indeed, it was not, madam!' cried Steen eagerly; 'you shock me by the mere suggestion of such a mischance, such a miscarriage of justice. The jury have behaved ill: they were persuaded, it seems, by a crotchety old fellow, one Dr Fungus, to give an open verdict; but they did not exhibit the reckless folly which you attribute to them. Upon my honour, madam, they did not. Their verdict was not Wilful Murder—nor Murder, of course, at all.'

'What was it, then?'

'It was, "Found Dead."'

'You are not used to falsehood, Mr Steen. There is something behind your words: tell it.'

'The verdict was what I have said, dear madam—"Found Dead; but how the deceased came by his death, there is not enough of evidence to shew."'

The widow's white lips moved slowly, as though committing these words to memory. Then she laid her hand upon the young man's sleeve, and drew him towards her. 'Stoop down,' said she, in low but distinct tones, 'and listen. You have begun this, and you must carry it out: God has laid it upon you.'

'Laid what, madam?'

'I have felt it all along,' continued she, without noticing his inquiry; 'but I have had no friend to confide in until now. You are my friend and Christie's: you shall win my love and hers—you would do much for that!—That's well. "Found Dead; but how he came by his death there is not enough of evidence to shew." It must be your task to discover what is wanting.'



'In the evidence, madam?' exclaimed the astonished lad.

'Yes; you must find it. The guilt of blood must be brought home—*home*—do you hear?—to the man who killed my Frank.'

'Killed, madam! Indeed, he was not killed. The jury—'

'He was murdered, sir. His blood calls from the earth to you, Charles Steen, and you must see justice done upon his slayer.'

The front-door bell was here rung so violently that the sound made itself heard in even that well-closed and secluded room. Breaking in upon the silence in which Death and Night combined to steep the house, and so immediately after such an appeal from the widow, it shook the young man's nerves. It was some little time before he spoke again.

'Supposing even your wild surmise were true,' urged he with hesitation, and half his mind attentive for that strange sound to be repeated—'and nothing seems to me more wholly improbable—how am I, a stranger in these parts, and ignorant of who were like to be your husband's foes, to set about the task you would impose upon me? Even if such a wretch exists as him you hint at, where am I to find him?'

The widow was listening also, with one thin finger raised, and her eyes fixed straight before her.

'Where? Perhaps here—perhaps now. Who knows?—I hear the front-door open. It is for you to act; for me, to watch and wait. You have told me what I asked, and won my friendship. There is more to win yet, much more; but you must be up and doing.—Good-bye, dear boy, good-bye.'

There was a knock at the door, and Christie entered.

'You are wanted, Mr Steen,' said she quietly, 'down-stairs.'

For a moment, the young man's heart seemed to cease beating; he grew cold from top to toe. For what was he wanted, and who had come for him at such an hour? Though he knew that Christie was looking from him to her mother with inquiring eyes, and holding the door open for him to pass out, his limbs refused to stir. When at last, with an effort, he arose and hurried out, one word from the widow's lips seemed to fill his brain—the same which, spoken by his royal master on the scaffold, so long haunted Bishop Juxton's ears, and scarcely with a greater significance—'Remember!'

#### CHAPTER XIV.—AN UNEXPECTED RETURN.

Charles Steen was not a nervous lad; young as he was he had had to 'guard his own head' in the world so often, and against such different opponents, that he had little fear, and still less was he subject to superstition. Yet he felt strangely apprehensive, fearful of he knew not what, as he closed Mrs Blissett's door, and descended to the little sitting-room which had been appropriated to his use. His recent conversation with his hostess, the lateness of the hour, the unknown nature of the unexpected summons, all combined to unman him. He was quite startled upon entering his room at finding himself face to face with the stout butler, who was, naturally enough, awaiting him there.

'Here's a telegram just come for you, sir,'

observed that functionary in a portentous tone; for if an elephant and howdah had arrived to carry the young gentleman away, Mr Maitland could scarcely have been more surprised. Telegrams, however common at the railway station half-a-dozen miles away, were rare indeed at Allgrove. The inhabitants, unacquainted with them as mere channels of communication swifter than the post, regarded them as heralds of death and ruin; and the butler was holding the yellow missive between his finger and thumb, as though it could impart contagion, or was filled with some explosive material fatal to the recipient.

Steen snatched it from him, and hastily tore it open.

'From Mrs Maude, Clifford Street, London, to Charles Steen, Morden Hall, Allgrove on the Rill.—Pray, come home at once, sir. Mr Frederick is very strange. Some news received to-day has upset him. I do not like to bear such a responsibility, alone.'

'Does the night-mail stop at Chudleigh?' asked the young man eagerly.

'No, sir; it does not. There is a parliamentary train very early in the morning, that gets into town at seven o'clock.'

'I must go by that, Maitland. There is news here which compels me to be in London as soon as possible.'

'Is Mr Frederick ill, sir?' asked the butler anxiously, yet not quite in that sympathising voice with which such inquiries are generally made. Doubtless it flashed across him: 'If this new master dies, my mistress will have her own again, and there need be no change in her domestic establishment.'

'Mr Blissett is not exactly ill,' returned Charles absently; 'but he needs my presence. Will you please to tell Miss Christie that much? Or, stop—give me an envelope.' He wrote a few lines in pencil at the foot of the telegram, and then enclosed it. 'Let her have this at once.'

The butler left the room as noiselessly as his weight permitted; he felt, as it were, freighted with mystery, and enjoyed it after the manner of his class. How oracular would he presently become to the attentive audience below stairs! If the misfortunes of our friends are not altogether displeasing, so the death and sickness of their betters are not an unwelcome topic to the denizens of the servants' hall.

Charles was left alone with Boleslaus for fully twenty minutes ere there was a gentle knock at the door, and Christie glided into the study, his visitor that night for the second time.

'You have read the telegram, Miss Christie?'

'O yes; but it seems very strange. Are you still determined upon starting by the first train?'

'Most certainly.'

'I suppose you are right,' said she quietly; 'mamma says she is sure you are. She bids me say: "God bless you," for her, and (though I do not know to what particular matter she alludes) implores you not to neglect her last injunction. "You will always be a welcome guest of hers," she adds, "although our home will henceforth be a very humble one." You have won dear mamma's heart, Mr Steen.'

She looked so beautiful and kind, her voice was laden with such tenderness, that it needed some self-control on the young man's part, and recollection of the mournful circumstances by

which they were on every hand surrounded, to prevent him crying out in a rapture: 'I would I had won yours, Miss Christie;' as it was, he dared not trust himself to speak. Then, quite unconscious of the effect she was producing, the young girl went on: 'I have written this letter to Uncle Frederick, at mamma's dictation, telling him that she prefers, for many reasons—associations which he will easily understand—to leave the Hall almost immediately for Rill Bank; so that everything will be at once at his disposal. And I have added—with dear mamma's approbation—our thanks to him for having sent to us, at such a time, so kind and considerate a proxy for himself as you. —I will not detain you, Mr Steen, for it is late, and you will have to start very early to-morrow.' She held out her small white hand in the old frank unconscious way; but it seemed to Charles that there was this time, as she referred to his departure, a little—a very little trembling of the voice. Her hand was trembling certainly, as though he had caught a fluttering dove within his double palms.

'God bless you, dear Miss Christie,' said he in broken tones: 'your mother and you have been very, very kind to me. I have been here such a little time, and yet I seem to be parting from old friends.'

'I hope so indeed, Mr Steen. You must write to us, you know—we shall of course be anxious to hear of Uncle Frederick's health.'

'I will write, Miss Christie, certainly. Be so kind as to let Mr Mellish know why I did not take leave of him.'

'I will take care to do that, Mr Steen.'

'And you will give my—may I say affectionate respects? to your mother, and say that I will not lose any opportunity—although I have no expectation that such will offer itself—of acquiring the information of which she stands in need.—There is nothing more, I think,' said Charles, still retaining that fluttering hand, 'except once more to renew the offer of my humble service, once more to give you the assurance of my—my deep devotion' (the young girl gently, perhaps unconsciously, withdrew her hand) 'to the interests of your mother and yourself. I am almost as powerless, I fear, Miss Christie, as I am certainly penniless; but such as I am, I am yours and hers—for ever.'

The tears came into her large eyes. 'Good-bye,' she murmured, and once again gave him her hand, but to be grasped only for a single instant.

'Good-bye, Miss Christie.'

And Boleslaus and Charles Steen were alone again, his majesty looking much displeased at the whole affair.

In the morning before daylight, Charles had been driven by Robert the groom (grown more melancholy than any other servant, it was observed in the kitchen, since master's death, and uncannily silent, like a man who had something on his mind), to Chadleigh Station, and was far on his way to town.

Should he find his patron worse or better? Would his sudden coming annoy him, or the reverse? Had Mrs Maude ventured to tell her lodger that she had sent the telegram? All these things passed through his mind; but what remained there, and did not pass, but obtruded itself again and again, was that strange unreasonable request made to him by Mrs Blissett. Why should he, of all men—a mere boy, and an acquaintance of but a few days old—be selected by that exacting lady as the avenger

of a fancied crime? for was not Mr Mellish, and indeed every other person he had spoken with, except that queer little doctor, convinced that the squire had accidentally come by his death. And again, even supposing he had met with foul play, why should *he*, Charles Steen, a total stranger to the neighbourhood and its inhabitants, be considered a fit person to unravel such a mystery?

What the rector had undesignedly let fall before him, on the journey down, concerning his patron, troubled him also not a little. It would be difficult to keep in favour—or even not to arouse the displeasure (as he had already once or twice unwittingly done), of so eccentric and excitable a character. The retention of his appointment (such as it was) seemed to be very doubtful, and if Mr Blissett withdrew his protection, whither was he to turn? Why was it that *this* reflection—which might have struck him almost with equal force on his way down to Allgrove, and yet, as we saw, failed to do so—presented itself in such dark colours on his return? If he did not acknowledge the reason even to himself, he could not help being conscious of it. Success in life, prosperity, sufficiency, about which he had hitherto been so little troubled, were now become of importance to him, because without them he could never hope to win Christie Blissett. As a dependant upon her uncle's bounty, such an idea was hopeless enough; but as a beggar—which he would certainly become, were that bounty to cease—it would be a mad phantasy indeed.

However seemingly inaccessible, however indifferent towards himself (and the sanguine young fellow did not think she was altogether *that*), Christie had already become to him that object in life without which (whether it be ambition or a mistress) no man ever seriously sets about his work in the world. A few days back, and he had been without aims in life—a mere thoughtless boy; but now he had a motive for prudence, which, he flattered himself, would for the future govern all his actions. In the meantime, it was his privilege to dream. Yes; without friends—without family—with a past top, some portion of which, if not in reality disgraceful, he could not now contemplate without a blush—on a hundred pounds a year, which could at any time be withdrawn at the whim of a capricious man, this young gentleman—so full of hopeful ardent vigour and youth—could lean back in the railway carriage, and build and people his castle in the air with infinite zest. I say 'in the air,' for had it any foundations whatsoever out of cloudland? Yes. These words of Mrs Blissett haunted him: 'You have won my friendship. There is more to win yet—much more. But you must be up and doing.' If the widow had not herein referred to her daughter's hand as being the possible guerdon of his exertions, what other meaning could be attached to her words? True, when she uttered them she was in a state of great excitement, and even if she knew what she said, certainly not in a frame of mind to weigh her expressions; and, moreover, they would have no weight at all, if he failed in that very mission, the hopelessness of which he had acknowledged to himself. Still, those few sentences rang merrily in his ears as marriage-bells, and listening to their reiterated music, he forgot the bitter years of dependence that were past, and ceased to anticipate those which (even if matters turned out well) were awaiting him in the future. He made a picture in his brain so bright and gay

that all shadow was excluded, and while the dream lasted, was as happy as any opium-eater of Cathay. Nor did he awake from it until the long train slowly dragged itself like a wounded snake into the London terminus.

He drove at once to Clifford Street, and reached it by half-past seven. The blinds were down (which made him start for a moment, until he remembered how early he had himself been stirring), and he rang the bell twice before it was answered.

'How is Mr Blissett?' inquired he with anxiety of the astonished servant.

'Oh, he's much as usual, I believe, sir. Leastways, I think he must be better, for he's gone out a-walking. I heard him leave the house at six o'clock or so—just as he used to do.'

It had been not unusual with the painter, previous to his recent indisposition, to fall into his old Indian habits, and take very early walks abroad, although, at other times, with characteristic irregularity, he would not retire to rest until after daybreak.

'Is Mrs Maude up yet?'

'No, sir.'

'Tell her I wish to see her as soon as convenient,' said Charles; and with that he retired to his own room, to refresh himself after his long journey. His ablutions performed, and the parlour affording small attractions, he walked into the studio, passing on his way Mr Blissett's room, the door of which stood open. He glanced within. There was the toilet-table, crowded with as many bottles of unguents and essences as that of any young belle; the little heap of frilled squares of linen on which the delicate occupant of the apartment was wont to cleanse his razor; the splendid dressing-case, left lying open, and glittering like a jewel-drawer. Somehow, although the bed-clothes were disarranged, it struck him that the bed had not been slept in. In the painting-room, all seemed as usual. Lucius Sylla and his antagonist were in the same unfinished state in which he had seen them last, and other uncompleted pictures were still at the same stage. He was strolling from one to the other, when suddenly his eye lit upon a white board on which was executed a rough charcoal drawing. There were only a few bold outlines, but they were admirably sketched in, and presented a very graphic picture. It was a desolate landscape enough; no living creature was portrayed upon it, nor even a tree. The very time of year which it would have represented seemed, he knew not why, to be dreary, though not absolutely wintry. It was a very melancholy piece. One far-extending range of barren upland filled the background, and in front as bare a valley; a straight road, running between high banks, cut it at right angles: all else was flat and level. On this sketch, which, roughly executed as it was, was in the painter's best manner, Charles Steen gazed intently. It was not, however, its artistic merits which engrossed him. This weird and dreary landscape seemed not altogether strange. Where and when could he have seen it? Did it lie in the neighbourhood of Cayenne Lodge? No; his remembrance of it seemed to be more recent. Had he seen it in any of those rides he was wont to take with his pupils the Maddens? No; he had seen that landscape more lately still.—Then it flashed upon him all on a sudden, and he recollected it quite well. His teeth chattered; his knees grew so loose that he had to support himself by the

easel; his hair seemed to bristle up; his forehead grew damp with the dew of terror.

At that instant, the front-door was violently slammed to. The shock and noise acted upon him like brandy on a sinking man. He rushed from the studio into his room, and softly closed his door at the same moment that that of the parlour was hastily opened. A quick step hurried through, and passed into the studio.

### 'THE CLOTH' OF OLD.

WE are indebted to Dr Doran for many pleasant chatty books; he is popular with all of us, and the favourite author with those off-and-on readers who take their literature down to the seaside, and diversify their studies with pebble-throwing. Open his volumes where you will, there is always something to win a smile, although it is not, unfortunately, always a good-natured one. He has long been addicted to 'rubbing the gilt off the gingerbread,' with respect to lay matters; and now, in his *Saints and Sinners*, he has laid irreverent hands upon the clerics. In the two pretty large volumes now lying before us, he has investigated clergymen of all periods with the particularity of an entomologist, but with eyes which, if not downright jaundiced, have certainly not regarded their object through spectacles of rose-colour.

Of course, he has his fling at the Irish Church, but his objection to that Institution is characteristic. It has always been conspicuous, it seems, for the absence of humour. It only affords one pleasant story throughout its history. 'A poor clergyman named Joseph had rendered some valuable service to the head of the House of Butler, who promised in return to further the preferment of the preacher. Time passed, and performance did not follow upon promise. Weary of waiting, the country curate found his way to Dublin, and contrived to obtain access to the pulpit of the church where the great lord attended divine service. Then he chose for his text: "Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgot him;" and so well improved the occasion, that he gained his ends.

At one time, it was considered an appropriate thing to do, and not at all merely a good joke, for a preacher to select a text with a *double entendre*. Thus, the grave South, in preaching before the worshipful Company of Merchant Tailors, took for his argument: 'Not a remnant shall be saved.' Again, it was once the habit of Cambridge undergraduates to express their disapprobation of a university preacher by the noisy scraping of their feet. This, of course, might be easily done while the countenance of the misbehaving person was earnestly fixed upon the pulpit, and therefore detection was impossible. One Dr James Scott announced his intention of preaching against this objectionable custom, and the university men went to hear him with the heaviest boots they could put on. Scott took for his text: 'Keep thy feet when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools; for they consider not that they do evil.' And he preached so well, that he carried his point. When Pitt, soon after he was made prime minister, at the age of twenty-four, went down to Oxford, some church preferment happened to be at his disposal, and the expectants were as usual 'legion;' we may easily imagine, therefore, that a great deal of emotion was excited by the university preacher,



who took advantage of his presence to remark that 'There is a lad here which hath five barley-loaves and two small fishes; but what are they among so many?' Oliphant, the Calvinist, who is spoken of by Burns as one who often made common-sense yell again, had a good deal of rough humour about him. His choosing of texts was not specially remarkable; but his comments on them would make folks stare in Westminster Abbey. He once observed, on the offer of Satan to give 'all these things' to Christ: 'Him gie Christ a' these things! Foul thief! he hadna the breadth o' his hand to gie.' And again, after quoting Peter's boast to our Lord: 'Lo! we have left all, and followed thee,' he added: 'A puir all, Peter, to mak' a boast o'!—a bit coble, and a wheen auld nets!' Mr Oliphant also took the liberty of remarking, with respect to the herd of swine being choked in the sea: 'And had it been but His holy will that the devils had been choked too!'

The Calvinists were curiously opposed to all new-fangled inventions. The introduction of the winnowing-machine into East Lothian greatly excited their ire. 'They could not see that such a thing was predestined, and the raising of artificial wind for private use and profit seemed a matter for reprobation. Accordingly, one minister actually refused the Sacrament to a man who made use of this invention of Satan. But such ministers did not scruple to direct the Lord as to what exact quantity of wind Scottish circumstances required. Thus, a Kirk minister, Mitchell of Lamington, in a prayer or command to the Lord, in approaching harvest-time, exclaimed: "O Lord, gie us nane o' your rantin', tantin', tearin' winds, but a thunderin', dunnerin', dryin' wind." In more stirring times, Mr Oliphant's independence of manners was outdone by that stanch Covenanter, Mr Guthrie, who denounced all who joined the royal army without first taking the Covenant. When Charles II. canvassed the Presbyterians for their vote and interest in 1651, he called, among other places, at Mr Guthrie's manse of Stirling. As he entered the apartment, the mistress rose to offer him a chair; but her husband exclaimed: 'Stop, my heart! The king is a young man; he can get a chair for himself.' The so-called 'merry monarch' concealed his anger until he came into his inheritance, when he hanged the Rev. Mr Guthrie. Cromwell's nobler nature was incapable of such revenge. He had sat out a long sermon of Zachary Boyd's in Glasgow Cathedral, full of abuse of the Protector himself. Mr Secretary Thurloe, as he and his master wended homewards, proposed that Boyd should be shot. 'Pooh!' said Cromwell; 'he's a fool, and you are another. I'll pay him out in his own coin; and he invited the preacher to a dinner, at which they did not sit long, but which was preceded by three hours of prayer by way of grace.'

It was not often, however, that the clergy were otherwise than very respectful to the ruling powers. We are afraid Dr Doran has rather a malicious pleasure in shewing how very subservient they could be. Charles II., of pious memory, was especially the object of clerical flattery; his fulsome preachers delighting, after his restoration, in taking for their texts such passages as 'Nay, let him take all, since my lord the king is returned.' The pulpits of the last century were what our author calls 'pleasantly agitated' by the coming of Prince Eugene, and many preachers even found him foreshadowed in the Scriptures. Whiston

dedicated to him his *Essay on Revelations*, and recognised in the astonished Prince the man foretold by the Apocalypse as the destroyer of the Turkish empire. The hero laughed, sent fifteen guineas for the complimentary statement, but expressed his doubts as to whether St John the Evangelist had really any acquaintance with him.

Young, who was one of George II.'s chaplains, was so mortified by that monarch's falling asleep during his sermon—by beholding 'great Brunswick with his head fallen back, his mouth wide open, and his eyes closely shut'—just after the delivery of one of his own most polished phrases, that he fairly and awkwardly burst into tears. Even this conduct was, however, less contemptible than that of one of the preachers before Louis XIV., who was so abashed by that little-great-man's gaze upon him just after he had stated: 'Sire, all men must die,' that he corrected himself with: 'Yes, sire, almost all men.'

The king who took the fullest advantage of this clerical sycophancy was our James I., who wrote to his Archbishop of Canterbury (Abbot), on the delicate inquiry concerning the Countess of Essex, in the following graceful fashion: 'If a judge should have a prejudice in respect of persons, it should become you rather to have a *faith implicit* in my judgment, in respect of some skill I have in *divinity* . . . and the best thankfulness that you that are *my creature* can use towards me is to reverence and follow my judgment.' King James had 'a gude conceit o' himself,' but it is not possible he could have so trampled upon his archbishop, unless the latter had literally grovelled at his master's feet.

That which most fostered servility, in a profession bound above all others to treat all men alike as brethren, was without doubt the institution of private chaplains. This class, up to the time of Charles II., and even after it, held a position that was absolutely menial. Even if qualified to act as tutor, the chaplain 'was liable to be called away from his pupils to say a *grace* before each health given by the after-dinner revellers in the parlour. His salary was not so good as the cook's or the butler's, and for his poor ten guineas a year he added to his office that of groom (if the groom chanced to be absent), and looked after a couple of geldings as well as a couple of boys. He seldom spoke in the parlour, except at grace or prayer-time. When the joint had furnished him with dinner, the chaplain rose, his toothpick in his mouth, his hat under his arm, and a sigh passing his lips at the sight of the chickens and tarts that were being placed before the knight and my lady.' In Queen Anne's time, the chaplain had bettered his position so far as the chickens went; but the second course over, he withdrew. Tarts were still forbidden to him, although in some families he had the privilege of eating mince-pies from All-hallows to Candlemas. It is a popular reproach against the clergy of our own times that they are too subservient to the aristocracy; but the subserviency of to-day is independence compared with their behaviour of old. 'Young fellows,' it seems, 'were proud of getting a footing in noble houses' in the capacity above described. There was another sort of private chaplain who 'bought' his position, and held it only for 'the honour of the thing.' The peer's steward created him, and as many more as he was privileged to do, getting a fee in return; but out of this money he furnished the reverend



gentlemen with a scarf *gratis*. The *Spectator* writes of this chaplain-making steward that 'if he happens to outlive any considerable number of his noble masters, he shall probably have at one and the same time fifty chaplains, all in their proper accoutrements, of his own creation, though, perhaps, there hath been neither grace nor prayer in the family since the introduction of the first coronet.' This appointing of an honorary chaplain was called 'granting a scarf,' from the silk scarf that was worn by the fortunate divine.

Such being the state of things on land, it is not to be wondered at that the profession of theology at sea was not in a very flourishing condition. As late as a hundred years ago, one Percival Stockdale was, through Garriek's interest, appointed chaplain to the *Resolution*, 74, Captain Sir Chaloner Ogle. Stockdale, like the professional brethren of his class, was not over-worked. He scarcely ever performed duty at all. One day, however, Sir Chaloner replied to the chaplain's salute, as they met in a street in Plymouth, by proposing that he should do duty on board on the following Sunday. 'I wish I could receive such a command more frequently,' said honest Percival. 'Ay, ay,' answered orthodox Sir Chaloner; 'I think, too, that this sort of thing should be done sometimes, as long as Christianity is afoot.'

The late Duke of York seems to have been some degrees of piety in advance of Sir Chaloner, but, on the other hand, his motives were not altogether disinterested. 'He used to post down to Newmarket on a Sunday, in order to be in time for the Monday's races. On such occasions, he travelled with a Bible and Prayer-book, and based his hopes of good luck on reading, as he spanked along, the Psalms and Lessons of the day.' Horse-racing, indeed, has not been without its attractions for our divines themselves. A late Archbishop of York (1807—1847) took a great personal interest in it, and, although he was never seen on a racecourse, liked to have a view of the proceedings. An over-zealous clergyman once complained to him of a professional brother who ran his mare at country races, although under an assumed name. 'The charge, made with intense seriousness, was listened to in the same grave spirit, and the mischief-maker thought he had succeeded in his object. "He runs that mare, does he?" said the prelate solemnly. "Well, look here, sir; I don't mind backing her for half a crown, if you'll give me the odds."'

After being in archiepiscopal company, it is a bathos to descend to Newgate ordinaries, who were not, at one time, too proud to take their seats at the hospitable tables of the Macheaths of the day, who had cash to spend, and were resolved to make their short life a merry one. Highwayman Rann, better known to fame as 'Sixteen-stringed Jack,' from the superfluity of ribbons at the knees of his breeches, had a grand farewell supper at Newgate on the Sunday night previous to his being hanged at Tyburn in the morning. No less than seven London nymphs were feasted at it by their departing lover, and the testimony of the chaplain is extant that the company were 'remarkably cheerful.'

But many steps in the professional scale below even Newgate ordinaries were the Fleet parsons; these were clergymen in difficulties, who, for no less than a hundred and forty years, made their living by joining together all comers in holy matrimony. Some of these worthies were not prisoners, and

advertised the fact (which was a falsehood) that no Fleet marriage pronounced by a parson who was in durance was valid; they plumed themselves upon their one claim to respectability, that they were not absolutely in jail, or obliged to confine themselves to 'the liberties of the Fleet,' wherein the taverns were situated at which these ceremonies were performed. The Rev. Dr Gaynam, one of the most famous of these gentry, 'not only contracted parties clandestinely, but for five shillings would issue a certificate (doubtless required for some felonious purpose) to the effect that he had married a certain couple whom he had never seen, and who had never seen each other.' Wyatt, who was in the Fleet Prison or precincts from 1713 to 1750, made sixty pounds a month by solemnising (!) these clandestine marriages. But there were Fleet parsons and Fleet parsons. Some would perform the desired office for a quartern of brandy; and others stooped to undermerry their professional brethren by taking a drain of gin and a roll of tobacco. When this great opportunity of 'wedding in haste and repenting at leisure' was done away with by act of parliament, and before Gretna Green marriages became fashionable, a sailing-packet was put on between Southampton and Guernsey, for the express accommodation of runaway couples.

That difference of opinion still existing between divines and their congregations as to the duration of a pulpit discourse, began at a very early period. The reprobate King John objecting to one of Hugh, Bishop of Lincoln's sermons, upon the ground that he had already had enough of it, sent up to the preacher to tell him so, and when he declined to stop, his majesty did the same, and left the church with all his roystering courtiers.

The latest illustration of this very reprehensible impatience occurred the other day at a celebrated public school, where, during a certain season, one of the masters happened to be the preacher in the neighbouring abbey. 'The pupils at the school, of whom the preacher's son was one, formed part of the congregation. To his audience, the minister delivered discourses which, however attractive to the older listeners, wearied the vexed ears of the scholars. At first, they attended with their usual decorous bearing; then they grew restless; on another Sunday, some fell asleep, for which they underwent rebuke; and finally, Sabbath after Sabbath, as the hour was passed over, and the limits of attention as well as time were transgressed, the lads grew exasperated. With exasperation came resolve and revolt. They arrested the preacher's son in the cloisters, and said to him, with a frank earnestness which he could not mistake: "Look here, you, sir! Every time after this that your father's sermons are more than twenty minutes long, we will give you a devil of a hiding on the Monday morning." The son, perhaps, was not unwilling to present the spirit of this Grand Remonstrance to his sire. The father was certainly a considerate parent and a sensible man, for he has never since exceeded the twenty minutes, while as for the scholars, they listen to his briefer discourses with an intensity of attention which is warrant for their gratitude.' What a pity it is that the influence of this example, and the advantage flowing from it, can necessarily be only partial; for as true as smart is the Yankee saying, 'that if a preacher can't strike ile in twenty minutes, it is a sign that he is either boring with a wrong gimlet, or does not know how to use it.' At the

same time, it is the Yankees who have first ventured on the experiment of allowing ladies the latitude (and longitude) of speech permitted to the pulpit. Massachusetts has ordained the Rev. Olympia Brown. Perhaps we even hear her discourses without knowing it, if we happen to sit under a divine who buys his sermons, since most of our purchased manuscript theology is now supplied from the American market. The friend of a certain popular preacher happened to find in the evening, in a volume of American discourses, the very sermon he had heard from his lips in the morning. 'Jack,' said he, for they were on free-and-easy terms, 'what pirates these Yankees are! They have taken the very excellent sermon I heard you preach this morning, and printed it—a dozen years ago.' We do not think that the clergy are so much to blame for this sort of plagiarism, as the custom which compels a man to preach when he has got nothing to say. Surely another man's wisdom should be more acceptable to his congregation than his own folly. At all events, the clerical profession have not seldom had the good sense to perceive this, and when they could not compose sermons, have purchased the assistance of those who could. Some of these persons treated their gift in a becoming and artistic spirit, giving not only mere matter, but directions for its most striking illustration—stage directions, as it were, for the guidance of their customer the preacher. 'There are manuscript sermons existing, a couple of centuries old, in the margin of which "Hem, hem" is written, to indicate when the preacher, after raising his strain to a height which should seem to authorise the relief, might cough, merely for the effect of the thing. M. Peugnot states that he had seen in the manuscript sermons of an old preacher these words in different parts of the margin: "Here, fall back in your seat;" "Start up;" "Use your handkerchief;" (and even) "Shout here like the very devil." This mention of the last-named Personage reminds us of that charitable Scotch divine who, after recommending several sorts and conditions of men to the prayers of his congregation, concluded with this generous sentiment: 'An' now, my friends, let us pray for the deil; there's naeboddy more needs praying for than the puir deil!'

This good clergyman may have been somewhat latitudinarian in his views, but he was infinitely preferable to that considerable class of his professional brethren who had no views except their own advantage. It is on record that even bishops have kept the main chance very steadily before their eyes. The Rev. Edmund Keene was 'a very clever man indeed, for he cheated Sir Robert Walpole. He accepted from him a living of seven hundred pounds a year upon the condition of marrying the baronet's illegitimate daughter, but as soon as he was inducted, he declined to fulfil his part of the bargain.' This gentleman, formed to get on in the world, became successively, during the last century, Bishop of Chester and of Ely. While in the latter position, he ordained 'that marvellously fine and affected clergyman, Dr Whalley,' to the rectory of Hagworthingham, Lincolnshire, upon the condition that he should not reside on it, 'for,' said the considerate prelate, 'the Lincolnshire fens would kill any one not a native.' So the Rev. Dr Whalley patronised the drama, and delighted society generally at Bath.

Sir Jonathan Trelawney, though he had cause to 'hope that he should not be condemned as a

bishop for the oaths which fell from his lips as a baronet,' entertained less lax views of his sacred calling than Bishop Keene. A clerical gentleman asked the former whether he might not, upon the authority of St Bernard, hold two livings at the same time. 'How could you do the duty?' 'Oh,' said the would-be pluralist, 'I would do the duty in one of the livings by deputy.' 'Ay, but,' rejoined the bishop, 'you would be damned in your own person.'

When not narrating these amusing, but we must say slightly scandalous stories concerning the clergy, Dr Doran entertains us with the whole history of church-going, of the institution of pews—some of them with snug fireplaces where chestnuts may be roasted (short of explosion-point)—and of church music. 'Charles Dibdin tells us of his meeting near the Land's End with several men carrying books and instruments to church. "Whose music do you sing?" asked Dibdin. "Oh, Handel, Handel." "Ah! Don't you find Handel a *little* difficult?" "Ay," said one of the men, "it was at first; but we alter'd un, and so we does very well wi' un now."

Altogether, *Saints and Sinners* is one of the most amusing books we have read for some time, but the title is a misnomer; it should, upon the principle of the larger preceding the smaller (exemplified in 'bread and butter,' 'bread and jam,' &c.), be *Sinners and Saints*; for very few of the latter sort are mentioned, and even those (such as Thomas à Becket) with the most doubtful claims to canonisation.

#### OUR MERE.

It interests me; and so, though you don't know anything about it, and have no concern in its history, please forgive a simple soliloquy about the Mere of my childhood and now graver age, some way past the middle stone of the threescore years and ten. The Mere taught, or at least tried to teach me a lesson this winter morning. It is now thinly frozen over, and, lifting up my eyes from my paper, and looking out of the study window, I see a score of boys making long shallow undulations in the ice by their slippery ventures. They worry me rather, these boys, for the ice will bear one at a time so well, that each fancies himself safe, and forgets that half-a-dozen gathered together weigh more than himself. As I look up now and then, I have seen several sudden dispersions of one of these unaccountable assemblies which continually come to pass among boys. Twenty times over, in spite of the Mere's warnings and mine, the whole troop rush together, to be scattered, for a few minutes, by crackings under their feet, which leave many constellations of stars in the ice. But there has been no general smash as yet.

The lesson I learned this morning was about my own weight. One of my nephews, a little fellow some eight or nine years old, and necessarily somewhat new to skates, had been scuffling bravely about, and holding a number of unexpected sittings or inquests on the dead body of the Mere. A light young lady cousin, too, was learning the rudiments unsteadily by means of a chair; so I thought I would defy my years, and, putting on a pair of

skates, set a graceful example, which I didn't, for it would tax an Apollo to shew easy gestures with his right leg in a hole. I went through in one minute, and off in another. The Mere used to bear me as soon as any one, years ago; but when an old friend fails us, we must recollect that it is just possible the fault may be on our side. Again, children sometimes forget that they grow, and are surprised to find that the airs and ways which met with forbearance, or even applause, in the little home-theatre, cease to be entertaining or tolerable when they continue them beyond childhood. I often fancy myself a boy when I get among boys; I did this morning; but the Mere soon undeceived me, and let me down into my proper place as a bulky uncle. Take no liberties with nature, my dear reader. Be young in spirit as you can, and be the more thankful the younger you can feel, but don't be in a hurry to follow the impulse by a material display of tricks and gambols. Let the sense of buoyancy, if you have any, shew itself in hearty sympathy for the young; let it make grave work fresh, but don't let it make grave years ridiculous. So much for the moral lesson I put my leg into, through the ice. I must needs try to skate after these boys, and now I believe they will compare me among themselves to an elephant, and think I weigh a ton.

This Mere has been one of my joys from youth, and though sometimes it has unaccountably shrunk, and even disappeared, and though I have been severed from it, while it remained full, by long periods of work elsewhere, I never return to it, and it never returns to itself, without my old associations coming back as fresh as ever. When my brother and I were little boys, we stocked it with fish, and many were the good days of sport we had from our early perseverance in catching perch, tench, and pike in the ponds about, and carrying them in a watering-pot to the Mere. At last, it dried up again. Greedy herons gathered round its shrinking pools, and gobbled up the unhappy fish, which were left crowded and scrambling together in the shallow water. When the last pool went, the monsters which were drawn out of the half-mud half-water have ever since grown in the memories and description of those who gathered them up and carted them to the house, whence they were mainly sent in presents to the neighbours.

When the Mere rose again, which it presently did, it was of course fishless. I was away, but the last generation followed the example of my brother and myself, and, from the same small ponds as of old, transported many score of little perch and others. I heard of and encouraged their efforts from time to time, until at last the year arrived when the Mere of my boyhood became my own, and the memories of the many happy days I had had upon, and in, and around it were mixed with a consciousness of the mourned loss which gave me now a strange paternal interest in the old home. Still, in this graver position, with a saddened tinge of interest in the scenes of my boyhood, I found myself bound with strong affection to the Mere, and I determined, if possible, to secure such a city of refuge, in the shape of a big hole, to the fish, as would preserve them, though the mere should shrink even below the bottom of

its hitherto lowest bed. It was tolerably full in the spring, last year, but during the summer shewed such symptoms of departure, that I saw no time was to be lost. It got very low by November; so I took counsel with a professional pond-digger, and we probed about the edges of the retreating mere, to seek for clay in which to dig, for thus we hoped to get a tenacious bottom for our projected pond. There was a brick-field close by, and we managed to trace the seam of clay to the water's edge, and my consulted expert staked out a space to be scooped out to the depth of nine feet below the then surface of the water, fourteen yards wide, and sixty yards long. This would make a capital pond. The digger contracted to do it at so much per square yard, and set to work with a gang of mud-splashed men and boys. Miserable work it looked, and heavy withal. First, as we were obliged to dig below the level of the water, a dam, or 'stank,' as they call it here, had to be made round the edges of the projected pond, and the little water which was then within it had to be baled out. I must say my friends did not shew much science in the process; they had no pump, or other mechanical lift, but a common scoop. However, they baled out some hundreds of pailfuls, and set to work at the land end of the pond. They dug away some nine feet, and, by all that was lucky, and yet at the same time, as far as the trouble of their work was concerned, unlucky, they came upon a set of springs, which rushed in with such force as to fill the portion of the pond which was made, quite full. Our head digger 'had never seen such strong springs; they came up for all the world like a pump.' So this portion of the pond had to be dammed off, and the remainder proceeded with as fast as possible. It was a sticky, slippery, muddy job. But they worked cheerfully, poking fun at one another, and taking quite a generous interest in the success of the operation. The water occasionally made inroads upon them, but was kept down by hard baling. At last, the pond was dug out, like a short length of a canal, and we let the water in from the upper portion which had been dammed off, and from which, I should say, there had been a little ditch dug into the Mere, to carry off the water which flowed from the new-found springs, or else it would have filled the rest of the pond faster than the men could have baled it out. As it was, we could not remove the whole of the dam. The water rose so fast that we had to leave a portion. But when the contents of the head of the pond were let into the large hole we had dug, some of the springs were laid bare for a few hours, and cheered us by an exhibition of the new source which had been obtained for the Mere; for, although the springs always work in the early part of the year, there were no signs of its annual rise when we struck these new ones some five or six feet beneath the surface; and when the last barrowful of clay had been dug out of the pond, and the water let in from the hitherto dammed-up portion at its land end, it soon filled the whole, and, after twenty-four hours, rose above the little rim of dam which we had made round the entire work, and flowed over it into the Mere with a volume of water which soon shewed itself over the whole place. It is rising now at the edges from beneath the ice, and makes a little circular flood wherever it can find a hole in the frozen lid now laid upon the Mere. The water, moreover, steadily refuses to freeze over the new



springs, although (I wrote the end of this a few days after I began it) the ice is now thick enough to bear well, and I have just come in from joining in a noisy game of Puss in the Corner, and dancing a Roger de Coverley, in skates. These are both capital fun on the ice. For the first, you make gloves, coats, or handkerchiefs serve as corners, and you have to look very sharp, I can tell you, if 'Puss' is at all a swift and cunning skater. In the second, the dance, the great fun is to go with your partner full drive under the raised arms of the end couple. When this chance is to be two children, and you are six feet high, you run the risk of carrying the couple along with you in a rare tangle of limbs, skates, and shouts, unless you can duck down low enough to escape the arch of their uplifted little arms.

It was a cold day enough, but we all got famously hot; and when the party came in to luncheon, they glowed as if they had been playing foot-ball in June, and kept away from the log-heaped fire, that snapped and blazed on the dogs in the wide chimney of our low, ceiling-beamed, old-fashioned parlour, which looked out on the Mere, where a parcel of boys from the neighbouring village-school were willing to forego their dinner in the dinner-hour.

We were down from town ten days just now, and got a week's skating. Thaw came on the day we left. I am afraid we were selfish enough not to be so sorry as we ought to have been, for the skates had been put by the evening before, with a lingering wish that our work would have let us stop and have a few days' more Puss in the Corner, and Roger de Coverley. But the soft rain came down the morning we left, and the surface of the ice looked hopelessly wet as we drove to the station, though some boys were trying hard to accomplish a last slide.

I hear of the Mere from time to time. The springs have worked well, and it is rising fast. We are in great hopes that the fish will never be left dry again. It is now crowded with swarms of little perch, among which, when we come down for a summer holiday, it is to be expected we shall find some of decent size.

But the effort to save the fish will ever be strongly associated in my mind with the labours needed in the digging of the pond. I was not present during the whole process, for I was busy enough with other work, of my own, at a distance, and the digging took some six weeks or more—two months, I think; but I visited the work while it was in progress. What tedious and heavy labour the sheer delver has to go through! How monotonously unscientific it is! What consumption of muscle, sinew, and flesh it seems to cause! and yet what wonderful muscular training it gets the men into! There were two little chaps at work in my pond, who wheeled barrows of thick clay the whole day long, without any apparent distress. I am strong and well myself, but the wheeling of one barrowful up the plank was about as much as I could do, and then my arms ached as if they had been beaten. But these men didn't mind it a bit. They were glad of the job, and whistled and joked among themselves whenever I saw them. And yet what monstrous toil to produce a few shillings! Glad as the men seemed of the work, and cheerfully as they did it, there was something akin to degradation in the business. It was done with the sheer spade, about the most primitive machine.

Here was man, the 'noblest work of creation,'

toiling throughout the day at the simplest form of labour, sleeping like a dead pig when it grew dark, and turning out at the first light in the morning to take up the spade and get into the clay-hole again for another day's spell of the same dull delving, while the rooks in the rookery, the cows which came to drink at the Mere, the ducks and swans upon it, all seemed to enjoy a pleasant, sociable, unwearied life, with plenty of time for play and conversation. True, the ducks got sometimes killed and eaten; but all things must die, and they didn't live in contemplation of a sudden end. They did not toil, any of them.

Certainly, there is something of a curse in many forms of human labour—I mean especially that labour which develops and exercises the least amount of thought—which must be monotonous, severe, unbroken, at the risk of daily bread.

And yet, if machinery were made to do much manual work, how should we provide for hungry hands? When we talk of the education of the working-classes, we must remember that there must at present be some who perform the lowest animal toil. These diggers will be what they are, through life, children of the soil. Let us hope, however, that improved education will be accompanied by a multiplication of holidays, with more rest, with more chance for a man to think, if it be ever so little, of some things, even of the world, beyond the clay under their noses, and the beer which is the coarse alternative to their toil and refreshment to their labours. The apparent contentment of the men who, wet-footed and mud-splashed, dug my pond, sweating all day and snoring all night, made me, I think, more sad than glad.

#### LONG AGO.

As through the poplar's gusty spire  
The March wind sweeps and sings,  
I sit beside the hollow fire,  
And dream familiar things:  
Old memories wake, faint echoes make  
A murmur of dead Springs.

Ah, days when life had aim and meaning,  
What buried years ago!  
When friend—no shadow intervening—  
Was friend, and foe was foe;  
When life had youth, and love had truth,  
And heart had faith to shew.

Somewhere now woods are green and tender;  
Somewhere hedgerows are filled  
With buds; somewhere, if winds befriend her,  
The thrush begins to build;  
Somewhere no fears has Spring, no tears  
For hopes that March has killed.

Sing, thrush, your songs of praise and passion;  
Fill all the budding wood  
With music of that bygone fashion  
My youth so understood!  
Now I am old, the world's grown cold,  
And God alone is good.

Printed and Published by W. & R. CHAMBERS, 47 Paternoster Row, LONDON, and 339 High Street, EDINBURGH.  
Also sold by all Booksellers.